

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A system for use in spinal stabilization, comprising:

an anchoring member comprising:

a bone-engaging portion, and

a head, said head comprising a recess and an external surface;

a rod; and

a rod persuader comprising:

a body with a first end and a second end, said second end being releasably attached to said anchoring member,

a pusher member at said second end capable of urging said rod into said recess of said anchoring member, said pusher member including a sleeve at least partially surrounding said second end,

a pistol grip attached to said body, and

a trigger coupling said pusher member to said body, wherein actuation of said trigger translates said pusher member toward said anchoring member,

wherein said pusher member further includes a slide slidably coupled to said body via said trigger and attached to said sleeve and at least one pusher bar integral with said sleeve and defining a recess for accommodating said rod upon contact therewith.

Claim 2 (canceled)

3. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said rod persuader further comprises:

a pair of fingers extending from said second end of said body for releasably gripping said anchoring member.

4. (original) The system of claim 3, wherein said pair of fingers are elastically separable to receive and grip said anchoring member therebetween, and said pair of fingers define projections that cooperate with recesses in said external surface on said anchoring member.

5. (previously presented) The system of claim 3, wherein said pusher member of said rod persuader further comprises a slide slidably coupled to said body via said trigger and attached to said sleeve, and wherein said sleeve comprises a pair of arms extending from opposite sides of said sleeve, said pair of arms being in juxtaposition with said pair of fingers, and upon translation of said pusher member toward said second end, said pair of arms translate adjacent to said pair of fingers to prevent said pair of fingers from separating from said gripped anchoring member.

6. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said rod persuader further comprises a passageway extending from said first end of said body to said second end of said body.

7. (original) The system of claim 6, wherein said body has a top-sided channel, said pusher member adjacent to said body has a lower channel, and said top-sided channel and said lower channel cooperatively form said passageway.

8. (currently amended) A system for use in spinal stabilization, comprising:

- an anchoring member comprising
- a bone-engaging portion, and
- a head, said head comprising a recess and an external surface;
- a rod; and

a rod persuader comprising

a body with a first end and a second end, said second end being releasably attached to said anchoring member, said body further including a pair of fingers extending from said second end for releasably gripping said anchoring member,

a pusher member at said second end capable of urging said rod into said recess of said anchoring member, said pusher member including a sleeve at least partially surrounding said second end,

a pistol grip attached to said body,

a trigger coupling said pusher member to said body, wherein actuation of said trigger translates said pusher member toward said anchoring member, and

a ratchet adapted to control the translation of said pusher member along said body, and configured to progressively lock to prevent said pusher member from translating away from said rod,

wherein said pusher member of said rod persuader comprises a slide slidingly coupled to said body via said trigger and attached to said sleeve, and wherein said sleeve comprises a pair of arms extending from opposite sides of said sleeve, said pair of arms being in juxtaposition with said pair of fingers, and upon translation of said pusher member toward said second end, said pair of arms translate adjacent to said pair of fingers to prevent said pair of fingers from separating from said gripped anchoring member.

9. (previously presented) The system of claim 8, wherein said pusher member of said rod persuader comprises:

a slide slidingly coupled to said body via said trigger and attached to said sleeve,

and

at least one pusher bar integral with said sleeve and defining a recess for accommodating said rod upon contact therewith.

Claim 10 (canceled)

11. (original) The system of claim 10, wherein said pair of fingers are elastically separable to receive and grip said anchoring member therebetween, and said pair of fingers define projections that cooperate with recesses on said anchoring member.

Claim 12 (canceled)

13. (original) The system of claim 8, wherein said rod persuader further comprises a passageway extending from said first end of said body to said second end of said body.

14. (original) The system of claim 13, wherein said body has a upper channel, said pusher member adjacent to said body has a lower channel, and said upper channel and said lower channel cooperatively form said passageway.

15. (original) The system of claim 8, wherein said ratchet of said rod persuader comprises interacting male and female teeth.

16. (original) The system of claim 15, wherein said ratchet is located between said pistol grip and said trigger.

17. (original) The system of claim 15, wherein said ratchet is located between said body and said pusher member.

18. (currently amended) A system for use in spinal stabilization, comprising:

- an anchoring member comprising
  - a bone-engaging portion, and
  - a head, said head comprising a recess and an external surface;

- a rod; and
- a rod persuader comprising
  - a body with a first end, a second end, and an upper channel, said second end being releasably attached to said anchoring member,

- a pusher member at said second end, said pusher member including a sleeve at least partially surrounding said second end, having a lower channel, and being capable of urging said rod into said recess of said anchoring member, said upper channel and said lower channel forming a passageway capable of receiving a fastener for securing said rod to said anchoring member and a driver for tightening said fastener to said anchoring member,

- a pistol grip attached to said body, and

- a trigger coupling said pusher member to said body and capable of urging said pusher member toward said anchoring member,

wherein said pusher member further includes a slide slidably coupled to said body via said trigger and attached to said sleeve, and at least one pusher bar integral with said sleeve and defining a recess for accommodating said rod upon contact therewith.

Claim 19 (canceled).

20. (original) The system of claim 18, wherein said body of said rod persuader further comprises:

a pair of fingers extending from said second end for releasably gripping said anchoring member.

21. (original) The system of claim 20, wherein said pair of fingers are elastically separable to receive and grip said anchoring member therebetween, and said pair of fingers define projections that cooperate with recesses on said anchoring member.

22. (previously presented) The system of claim 20, wherein said pusher member of said rod persuader comprises a slide slidably coupled to said body via said trigger and attached to said sleeve, and wherein said sleeve comprises a pair of arms extending from opposite sides of said sleeve, said pair of arms being in juxtaposition with said pair of fingers, and upon translation of said pusher member toward said second end, said pair of arms translate adjacent to said pair of fingers to prevent said pair of fingers from separating from said gripped anchoring member.

23. (original) The system of claim 18, wherein said rod persuader further comprises a ratchet adapted to control translation of said pusher member along said body, and to progressively lock to prevent said pusher member from translating away from said rod.

24. (currently amended) A system for use in spinal stabilization, comprising:

an anchoring member comprising:

a bone-engaging portion, and  
a head, said head comprising a recess and an external surface;

a rod; and

a rod persuader comprising:

a body with a first end and a second end, said second end being releasably attached to said anchoring member,

a pusher member at said second end capable of urging said rod into said recess of said anchoring member,

a pair of fingers extending from said second end of said body for releasably gripping said anchoring member, said pair of fingers being elastically separable to receive and grip said anchoring member therebetween, and said ~~pair~~<sup>pair</sup> of fingers defining projections that cooperate with recesses in said external surface on said anchoring member,

a pistol grip attached to said body, and

a trigger coupling said pusher member to said body and capable of urging said pusher member toward said anchoring member,

wherein said pusher member of said rod persuader further comprises a slide slidably coupled to said body via said trigger, and a sleeve attached to said slide and partially surrounding said second end, and wherein said sleeve comprises a pair of arms extending from opposite sides of said sleeve, said pair of arms being in juxtaposition with said pair of fingers, and upon translation of said pusher member toward said second end, said pair of arms translate adjacent to said pair of fingers to prevent said pair of fingers from separating from said gripped anchoring member.

25. (currently amended) A system for use in spinal stabilization, comprising:

an anchoring member comprising

a bone-engaging portion, and  
a head, said head comprising a recess and an external surface;

a rod; and  
a rod persuader comprising  
a body with a first end and a second end, said second end being releasably attached to said anchoring member,

a pusher member at said second end capable of urging said rod into said recess of said anchoring member,

a pair of fingers extending from said second end for releasably gripping said anchoring member, said pair of fingers being elastically separable to receive and grip said anchoring member therebetween, and said pair of fingers defining projections that cooperate with recesses in said external surface on said anchoring member,

a pistol grip attached to said body,

a trigger coupling said pusher member to said body and capable of urging said pusher member toward said anchoring member, and

a ratchet adapted to control translation of said pusher member along said body, and configured to progressively lock to prevent said pusher member from translating away from said rod,

wherein said pusher member of said rod persuader further comprises a slide slidably coupled to said body via said trigger, and a sleeve attached to said slide and partially surrounding said second end, and wherein said sleeve comprises a pair of arms extending from opposite sides of said sleeve, said pair of arms being in juxtaposition with said pair of fingers, and upon translation of said pusher member toward said second end, said pair of arms translate adjacent to said pair of fingers to prevent said pair of fingers from separating from said gripped anchoring member.